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BAGHDAD FOR POL, PAO, ROL COORDINATOR, NCT, IRMO, USAID

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KISL, IZ, IR

SUBJECT: KURDISH REFUGEE SPEAKS ABOUT IRANIAN TORTURE; REQUESTS ASYLUM

CLASSIFIED BY: JBIGUS, PRT LEADER, REO Kirkuk, DoS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. An Iranian Kurd contacted Kirkuk Regional Embassy Office requesting asylum. He maintained that Iranian authorities detained him in June 2005 for writing negatively about the government. He claimed that he was tortured by Iranian intelligence and sent to Mariwan prison for three months. He fled to Iraqi Kurdistan in January, when Iranian authorities tried again to seize him. END SUMMARY.

Background and Detainment

¶2. (C) On April 3, Mahdeh Ahmadi, an Iranian refugee hiding in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, contacted Kirkuk Regional Embassy office seeking political asylum. He said he is a freelance journalist, who writes political articles - via internet sites - targeting the Iranian Kurd audience.

¶3. (C) In June 2005, Ahmadi was writing about historical atrocities committed by the Iranian government in Kurdish villages in western Iran. He stated that he had obtained official documents and was publishing articles and reaching out to human rights organizations regarding his findings. As part of his research, Ahmadi said he had traveled to the Iraqi Kurdistan region. On Ahmadi's return from Iraq, Iranian officials detained him at a checkpoint between the Iranian cities of Mariwan and Sinna, near the Iraqi border.

Tortured, Interrogated, and Imprisoned by Itla'at

¶4. (C) Ahmadi claims he spent the next two days in jail, where the Iranian police tortured and beat him. Following the two days in jail, Iranian police sent him to an Itla'at (Iranian Intelligence) facility in Sinna for eight days of further torture and interrogation. Ahmadi said that the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran (KDP-I) by this time had written an article, mentioning his capture. In response, Itla'at tried to force Ahmadi to write an article denying his capture, but he refused.

¶5. (C) Iranian authorities next sent Ahmadi to a large prison in Mariwan, Iran - near the Iran-Iraq border - for the next three months. Ahmadi said that the prison guards at Mariwan distributed addictive drugs to the prisoners and then withheld them as a means of torture. Ahmadi claimed that he declined the drugs and eventually stopped eating, going on a 10-day hunger strike. When the prison guards tried to force Ahmadi to eat, he sewed his own mouth shut.

¶ 6. (C) After Mariwan, Ahmadi stated that he returned to the Itla'at facility in Sinna for about 20 additional days. Itla'at officials interrogated him on the articles he had written. They also accused Ahmadi of a long list of activities, including: belonging to the KDP-I, writing anti-Iranian literature, discouraging Kurdish Iranians to vote in elections, and galvanizing Iranian Kurds to rise up against the Government. Ahmadi noted that during the course of his four-month captivity, the court never examined his case. Ahmadi also claimed he was not allowed to contact his family.

Released From Prison, But More Threats

¶ 7. (C) Iranian officials eventually released Ahmadi approximately four months after his capture when a family friend offered the Iranian Government as collateral a \$60,000 piece of property. Ahmadi's friend and the Iranian Government negotiated a deal, stipulating that the land would remain with Ahmadi's friend if Ahmadi remained in Iran; however, if Ahmadi left, the Iranian Government could confiscate that property. According to Ahmadi, he lived in Iran for two months after his release, but remained under surveillance. Itla'at attempted to bribe him to spy on the Kurdish opposition, but he refused. Ahmadi said that Itla'at officials on 23 January 2006 returned to his home to arrest him, but he escaped through the roof of his house, fleeing directly to Iraqi Kurdistan. Ahmadi is hoping to apply for political asylum in the United States. He provided the REO with a CD containing multiple press articles and statements about his unjust imprisonment.

Biographic Note

KIRKUK 00000099 002 OF 002

¶ 8. (C) Ahmadi, an Iranian Kurd, was born in 1985 in the Gaura village near Sinna. He attended high school and college in Sinna. Ahmadi claims to have been a journalist in Iran for the last five years, having worked for several Iranian newspapers. He said that the Iranian regime shut down several of those newspapers because they published articles that criticized the government. Ahmadi currently writes political articles for internet sites.

Comment

¶ 9. (C) Ahmadi told a coherent and convincing story. We assess that he would be willing to share his story freely to the Western press, if he were granted protection. Ahmadi showed IPAO official documents from a U.S. State Department website (www.usinfo.state.gov), citing Ahmadi as a human rights case in Iran. Furthermore, British Embassy diplomats in Tehran have confirmed to us that Ahmadi is one of their contacts and that he shared with them a similar story he told us.

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